

Summer 8-7-2020

Social Power of Jazz Festivals

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Social Power of Jazz Festivals

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Arts Administration

by

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LLB Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University, 2009

August, 2020

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter I. Introduction	1
Background	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Primary Research Question	5
Sub-Questions	5
Rationale for Study	5
Limitations for Study	6
Chapter II. Research Methods.....	8
Chapter III. Power of Experience	13
Space, Identity, and Belonging	13
Living Utopia	19
Leisure as Resistance	24
Chapter IV. Power of Representation.....	27
The J-word	27
Newport Jazz Festival	30
Social Responsibility and Curatorial Approach	38
Chapter V. Conclusion	45
References	47
Vita	54

List of Illustrations

Pic 1. Poster of The Katowice JazzArt Festival	23
Pic 2-5. Pages of brochure of the Newport Jazz Festival 19.....	43-45
Pic 6. Poster of Berlin Jazzfest 1968	47
Pic 6. Poster of Berlin Jazzfest 2015.....	47

Abstract

Jazz festivals occur in all parts of the world, small cities and metropolises, urban and rural landscapes, stadiums, churches, streets, and abandoned factories. Being a part of the entertainment industry, they have the potential to impact social change. Jazz festivals help us reconsider notions of identity and community, and their communal experience has the potential to undermine dominant social norms. The industry of jazz festivals is based on Black music and has a history of positive and negative social outcomes. Evaluating festivals through the symbolic meaning of music provides an optic into how festivals marginalize and exploit African American cultural contributions. The ethical approach of producing the festivals is meant to alter practice toward recognition of its role in pursuing social justice.

Key Words

Jazz festival; Black music; experience; identity; community; representation; politics.

Chapter I. Introduction

*Have something besides the technical. Make it for
something. Make it for kindness, make it for peace,
whatever it is.*

Sonny Rollins

Background

Jazz festivals are usually considered big entertainment, often with commercial potential. They occur in all parts of the world, in small cities and metropolises alike; you can find them in urban and rural landscapes, in stadiums, churches, streets, and abandoned factories. They attract international audiences and form communities. They represent different cultures and identities, create collective experiences, and memories. Despite all this, and despite their media attention, the role of jazz festivals in social change is often neglected.

Since 2016, I've produced Am I Jazz?, an international festival of Black American and improvised music (amijazzfestival.com). Live music's potential to alter the social order is the reason why I entered this industry after law and public policy degrees. Music teaches us to take risks, to celebrate contrasts and different cultures, to accept "the other" and to collaborate. This humanitarian mission, rather than mere entertainment, is my interest.

Aside from the legal obligations and requirements, I feel responsible to the audience, musicians, and everyone else involved with putting on an event. Festival leaders might

make the music to be heard, but the promotional elements of a festival influence the perception of the music, helping to interpret it for the audience, and creating images of the artists and the festival experience. Festival producers create the festival community and promote certain values in it.

I started working on this thesis in 2019, but the events spring of 2020 demonstrated without a doubt the importance of rethinking the social impact of music festivals. The COVID-19 pandemic presented major challenges to the music industry as a whole (Ralston, 2020; Thomas, 2020; Fairman, 2020). First, it demonstrated how essential the collective experience of music is. Records and streaming services might fill a need, but nothing can replace the complex experience of intimacy, travel outside the home, and shared collective physical reactions, such as applause (Ralston, 2020; Spego, 2020). Second, it became obvious how vulnerable this field is. Whether or not the government subsidizes the industry, festivals will not survive this economic crisis without the support of the community that they have supported in their own way. Finally, the pandemic raised overdue ethical questions with regards to the financial and aesthetic representations of their artists (Spero, 2020; EJM, 2020). The public discussion is unprecedented. In just three months, festival leaders from many countries have held online panel discussions to figure out how to make the industry more sustainable and ethical. As has been repeatedly voiced, the festival industry should not go back to normal after the pandemic, given the host of problems with that normality (Ralston, 2020; Spero, 2020; EJM, 2020). Often festivals compete over big name artists drawn from a single list. Instead of spending time with those communities, artists have to constantly travel to new cities without the time to connect deeply with them (EJM, 2020). This helps neither communities nor artists. The industry's obligation to serve artists and communities has been lost.

Recently, the US saw a new wave of the Black Lives Matter movement in response to George Floyd's death, among countless other African Americans killed by police. While these international protests confront systemic racism, the conversation hasn't been directed towards the festival industry. In contrast to the pandemic crisis, I have not seen any panel discussions on this problem. The jazz festival industry kept silent while organizations such as Jazzfest Berlin and North Sea Jazz Festival participated in the #TheShowMustBePaused and #BlackoutTuesday action. Creating flash mob with these hashtags Jamila Homas and Brianna Agyemang (2020) appealed to a multi-billion dollar music industry. "[This] industry that has profited predominantly from Black art. ... It is the obligation of these entities to protect and empower the Black communities that have made them disproportionately wealthy in ways that are measurable and transparent." Some festivals additionally released the statements of support. Detroit Jazz Festival provided a list of six protest jazz songs and posted a statement saying that "jazz music, continues to serve as a unifying force for social change and justice ... without these gifts, the Detroit Jazz Festival would not exist" (Detroit Jazz Festival, 2020). Newport Jazz Festival reposted a message from founder George Wein, who recalled that he could not bring his wife to New Orleans at the beginning of production the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival as interracial marriage was still illegal in the South. He argued that police brutality "shows America at its very worst. The Newport Festivals show America at its best. None of us should rest until Black Lives Matter" (Wein, 2020).

No matter how eloquent these statements are, their wording supports the fighters and not the fight. News about the social media flash mob brought disproportionate attention to non-Black or European artists that joined the action, such as Peter Gabriel, Radiohead, Billie Eilish, and Massive Attack (Reed, 2020; Moreland, 2020). The jazz festival industry is not

confronting the whiteness on its boards and staff. It will not see how it reflects the same institutional racism that it critiques in its statements of solidarity. Kaisha S. Johnson reflected on this by saying, “There’s no room for solidarity in white supremacy culture. Capitalism doesn’t allow it. Patriarchy doesn’t allow it. Paternalism doesn’t allow it. Power hoarding doesn’t allow it” (Johnson, 2020). I want to hear this as a call to action, not a verdict.

Statement of the Problem

The role of the music festival industry has been reduced to entertainment (Negrier, Agusti, & Guerin, 2013; Robinson, 2015). There could be panel discussions at festivals dedicated to the social justice issues, but the event itself is seen as apolitical. As with any collective experience, a music festival is a powerful instrument for creating public opinions, values, and norms. Ignoring this fact not only limits the power of the festival, but also relieves the liability of potentially ugly results. In a case with a jazz festival, it reproduces and increases institutional racism.

It can be assumed that the jazz festivals are not concerned with the symbolism and meaning behind the art form it promotes. Aside from Jazzfest Berlin, I have not seen an organizations releasing a festival statements for every event. Communication with the audience about the curation of artists and the context of their collective representation is common practice in the art world (Rossiter, 2010). The film festivals industry also uses this tool for more in-depth engagement.¹ Within the music festival industry, this approach is largely absent. Can we assume that these organizations are not reflecting on their curation even among themselves? As a result, it not simply a reduction of the potential of music but

¹ For instance, Edinburgh International Film Festival (edfilmfest.org.uk), International Film Festival Rotterdam (iffr.com), The Berlinale (berlinale.de), and others.

leads to the appropriation and exploitation of Black music and artists. One consequence of this can be how the big European festivals shifted to rosters of European jazz musicians from Black American artists (Bares, 2015). Another illustrative case happened at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 2018 when they approved the racist performance of SLÄV, a show based on slave songs produced by a mostly white cast (Hamilton, 2018).

Primary Research Question

What is the potential of jazz festivals to work towards social change?

Sub-Questions

1. What aspects of the festival endow them with social power necessary for social change?
2. How do jazz festivals contribute to the representation of Black American culture?
3. How can festival leaders ethically serve both the music and the communities?

Rationale for Study

Although this thesis is based on a literature review, the purpose of the research is both theoretical and practical. Working in the arts field, it is not enough to acquire administrative skills. Good intentions mean nothing without efforts toward learning the underlying meanings of music, its representation, interpretation, and presentation. The importance of this has been underrated for a long time. Thus, this study is meant to show that in addition to entertainment, the festival affects the social order itself. Re-evaluating how Black music and artists are represented may help arts administration professionals and music industry personnel to become aware of it.

The research expands the understanding of the role of jazz festivals in social change and sparks the conversation about the social responsibility of festival leaders. If they fail to be conscious of the results of their actions, they will not sense or accept their responsibility. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement accelerated the re-evaluation of festival values and a sense of duty into public discussion. During these times, values of compassion, empathy, and tolerance are important, and expansion of them should become the main purpose of organizations working with the sensitive social change vehicle that is live music.

Limitations for Study

The word “political” in this thesis is used in its broad meaning, which is ideas and approaches to social norms and values, not relationships between citizens and the government (Miller. 1980).

Research is limited by the jazz festival industry, even though African American Thought does always not recognize separation on genres within Black music. I did not deeply survey the experience and criticism of other music movements and festivals including techno, house, hip-hop, soul, and other genres, all of which contribute to Black American music.

Another limitation is that the study is based on location. I took the European context and the United States’. The jazz festival industry has a much broader geography than these two regions; however, for my research, I use the event’s place of origin, and music’s place of origin.

My research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests as a response to George Floyd's murder and systemic racism. The personal

experience of the industry under the lockdown, the conversations both public and private on both issues, and overall perception of the bifurcation point also affected the conclusions of the research.

Chapter II. Research Methods

The potential of jazz festivals to alter the social order in a society can be explained through the power of gathering (e.g. Falassi, 1987; Waterman, 1998, Turino, 2008), the power of music in general (e.g. Goehr, 1994; Damodaran, 2016,), or the specific power of Black music (e.g. Du Bois, 1968; Floyd, 1995). Most of my cited authors utilize one of these perspectives. Here, it is not an either/or question, but a matter of highlighting how the festival event format intervenes in the political capacity of music, intensifying or muting it. The combination of knowledge about collective experience and collective representation further explains the cultural effect of jazz festivals on society and its democratization.

The body of knowledge about jazz festivals is fragmented and separated into different disciplines. The diverse disciplinary work across art administration (e.g. Boyle-Clapp, Brown, & Gard, 2017), business (e.g. Clarke & Jepson, 2016), urban studies (e.g. Kutschke, 2015), sociology (e.g. Delanty, Giorgi, & Sassatelli, 2011), ethnomusicology (e.g. Whitmore, 2016; Mahon, 2014), art criticism (e.g. Goehr, 1994), and African American studies (e.g. Du Bois, 1968; Floyd, 1995; Monson, 2007; Moten, 2018) creates the sense that my question has been exhaustively studied. This is not the case. It is important to combine and systematize available studies to be able to see the jazz festival as a unique social phenomenon that mirrors and affects social change.

The best way to conduct an interdisciplinary study is a literature review methodology. It synthesizes and compares research into one subject from different perspectives, serves as a foundation for the development of theory, and creates guidelines for policy and practice

(Snyder, 2019). To narrow the subject, I did a thematic analysis described as “the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Through work by scholars, philosophers and critics, I looked for common ideas, concentrating on “areas of consensus” (Knopf, 2006) such as collective experience, identity, communities, and representation. Finally, I compared abstract concepts with their practical realizations. In this way, the research can serve not only as a theoretical contribution but as a practical analytic as well.

In terms of impact on social change, most of the findings agreed that cultural events can alter the balance of power. Scholars such as Thomas Turino, Alessandro Falassi, Stanley Waterman, and others have explained how festivals affect the emergence of new social groups (Falassi, 1987; Waterman, 1998, Turino, 2008). Festivals and other public cultural practices articulate collective identity, which is the major factor in forming and sustaining communities. Music “serves to catalyze and subsequently define different people in different ways, whether to bring groups together or to reaffirm the boundaries that divide them” (Roy, 2010). Festivals also can be learned through the processes of social construction that produce the identities, institutions, and ideas that often became naturalized and seem unchangeable (Mahon, 2014). Some elements of the music festival are universal to all arts festivals, yet I see music as a particularly powerful medium in terms of facilitating communication between individuals and groups (Roy, 2010; Shelemay, 2011). The audience dances and sings along to the music, not simply *observing* the art. This level of collective participation in the festival is much higher and the outcomes of it are distinct. The emergence of new identities and communities follows from its fight for space and justice.

The music festival is also a kind of utopian world. (Saffle, Yang, 2010; Goehr, 1994). It is a space where people become liberated from the rules of ordinary life, immersing themselves in a special, art-curated world, and feel their freedom (Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014). Utopia, as in Thomas More's book (1516), is a dream place with no social, political, or cultural conflict, and the festivals can serve as an example of such a society. It might be impossible to recreate the dream island from the story of an English philosopher, but the festival encourages us to seek a utopian element, and pushes for the perpetual development of society. Collective memories, and power of the experiences of listening to music and exploring the festival space are some of the aspects of the festival that endow them with social power. This is expanded in Chapter III.

The combination of Critical Theory and Performance Studies within African American Thought shows the revolutionary potential of music on individual and society (Du Bois, 1968; Adorno, 1990; Kutschke, 2015). Critical theorists argue that a political component exists in all social phenomena; music is not an exception (Bowie, 2009). For example, Adorno called popular music "social cement" (1990), highlighting its role in establishing and preserving social norms. Herbert Marcuse focused on the experience of the listener, that through abstract messages of instrumental music can develop sensibility, imagination, and reasoning that liberates from the dominant ideology (Marcuse, 1977).

African American Thought brings the Black experience in the United States to the focus of academic studies (Harris, 2005). It means to develop "a set of critical tools to help explain the political distinctiveness of black life-worlds and how this distinctiveness is structured by a series of relations between individual and community, self and other, state and society" (Hanchard, 2010). Performance Studies is an interdisciplinary body of knowledge

about the role of music, dance, and other forms of art, exploring how powerful the music medium is. For example, Black music is an important tool in forming cultural identity and consciousness through symbolism (Du Bois, 1968; Jones 1963; Hughes, 1990; Moten, 2018) and representation (Jones, 2010). Evaluating festivals that promote Black music through the underlying meaning of this music provides an optic to see how festivals marginalize and exploit African American cultural contribution. We can evaluate the consequences of the control and exploitation of cultural symbols in the music festival industry. Chapter IV is dedicated to the contribution of jazz festivals to the representation of Black American culture.

Chapter IV explains the role of festivals as mediators between artists and communities. Analyzing the symbolism and history of Black music with regards to the exploitation and appropriation of it allows us to design the perspective for the ethical evaluation of the festival organizations and individuals' practice. The whole text of my research is supported by examples of the practice of jazz festivals; however, two cases have been examined in-depth: Newport Jazz Festival and Jazzfest Berlin (DE). These festivals are two of the oldest jazz festivals in the world. Newport Jazz Festival was launched in 1954, and Jazzfest Berlin in 1965. The memoirs, festival statements, programs, posters, and CD releases show the approaches that were used to attribute music aesthetically and socially. Since social change happens slowly, the long history of the organization provides a more indicative overview of the chain of causes and effects.

An analysis of this broad field identifies common beliefs about the potential of jazz festivals to undermine norms. At the same time, it can produce an evaluation of jazz festivals in terms of Black American representation. For a long time, the standard approach for programming and production was not questioned; only recently has the music industry begun

to realize its responsibility toward the pursuit of social justice. There is the tendency to launch human rights-focused panel discussions at festivals or create professional advocacy organizations, but it would be more effective to start within the industry itself. Given the current wave of Black Lives Matter protests, it is clearly relevant. The combination of studies from different perspectives and the theoretical reflection on practice shows the possibilities of festivals to make society more humane. It puts the responsibility on festival leaders to recognize this and make changes accordingly.

Chapter III. Power of Experience

Space, Identity, and Belonging

Throughout history, music has played a central part in gathering events, processions, and celebrations. Religious and folk customs include musical practice in their rituals. Such vitality in all human cultures and colorful variety of practices proves the deep meaning under a social phenomenon. Music, as an experience, goes beyond sharing memories of entertainment. Aside from its experiential possibilities, people interact with it — singing or playing along, dancing. Live music events transform the composer's message into a tool of communication between audience members. Thomas Turino, in his monograph *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, states that “In the moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others” (Turino, 2008). The value of collective experience became even more obvious since the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Even though the audience has access to music through records and online events, the inability to share the space and emotions has broken the concept of the festival.

Researchers of festivals point out the importance of a festival space for the articulation, performance, and rediscovery of identity (Aitchison & Pritchard, 2007). Festivals occupy locations that are normally removed from everyday life; they can also be in familiar spaces which change purpose for the festival. The “one time only” setting allows people to leave their mundane routines, act in different ways, dress differently, and experiment with a personal presentation that sometimes is impossible to do within established socially circumscribed life. Thus, it leads to the concept of liminality, which is a pivotal

quality of the festivals (Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014). People immersed in an unrealistic, art-curated world, isolated from mainstream culture, feel more free. As Dowd, Liddle and Nelson observe, “Drawn together from geographically dispersed locations and away from the expectations of everyday life, fans and performers can immerse themselves in a particular culture and experiment with different identities” (Bennett & Peterson, 2004).

The locations of today’s festival are diverse. Festivals in big cities might subvert a familiar city, disrupting the regular patterns of citizens, and altering their standard courses. Winter Jazzfest in New York City, for instance, occupies dozens of venues, none of which normally host jazz concerts. This festival allows audiences to visit their favorite venues to hear something new; at the same time, it allows jazz lovers to visit new venues and explore the city. Some festivals become huge attractions for tourism, and this can transform smaller cities. For example, Big Ears Festival takes place in Knoxville, Tennessee. During four days in March, the whole city transforms into a festival site. Aside from the sizable economic contribution to the city, it creates an aura. The whole city seems to live utopian. As Waterman (1998) describes:

“Churches, castles and school halls are pressed into service as festival venues; streets become art galleries and planned or even spontaneous sites of performance; cafes, pubs, and restaurants are remade into places in which the merits and defects of this performance or that artistic creation are discussed and debated.”

A new generation of festivals seeks to explore hidden sites of the cities: abandoned or neglected public zones, industrial territories. Maughan Klaic describes the festival program as “urban intervention,” that can “enliven their experience of negotiating the public space of the city with surprising, even provocative encounters” (Klaic et al., 2014). Such intervention

includes city decorations, lighting, opening buildings and sites that are normally closed to the public, and other creative options. The concentration of people at sites that are usually totally or almost empty affects perception of these places. Citizens have a mental map of the city, and festival surroundings help to reconsider that map. It shows the socio-political power of the festivals as a mediator in the revitalization process (Klaic et al., 2014). Creating buzz around specific places, they start the public debate around its purpose and ownership, and as a result get a more democratic, critical and creative approach to the future of the site (Klaic et al., 2014).

Additionally, in the context of some jazz festivals, space is often created with an idea to mimic New York City. William Kirk Bares describes the North Sea Jazz Festival as a simulation of New York East Village with its abundance of jazz joints and the status of world jazz capital (Bares, 2015). George Wein, artistic director of the Newport Jazz Festival, had the ambition to recreate the city. In his memoirs *Myself Among Others* (2003) he writes that the initial idea of programming the festival came from his enjoyment of crossing between different venues from Greenwich Village to Harlem, and 52nd Street. Over the course of a single night, he could listen to Dixieland, big bands, swing, unique singers, and modern jazz. This diversity inspired his concept of the Newport Jazz Festival.

The place does matter, but so does the journey to it. Some festivals take place in natural landscapes: deserts², valleys³, mountains⁴, and islands⁵. The journey to the remote destination is also part of the experience. It is a freeing transition of identity. Festivals such as Nevada's Burning Man Festival or Secret Garden Party (UK) create alternative realities that need to be *reached*. Susan Luckman illustrates this with a road movie narrative when the journey is represented as a transition not only literal but figurative as well (Bennett et al., 2014). The protagonist heads to the main event (the festival in this case), and during the road endures its existential personal experience, becomes changed by the travel and people he or she faces on the way. In the end, it is never the same person who started the journey. In her book on the Burning Man Festival, Rachel Bowditch joins her colleagues in pointing out that there is not always a difference between tourist and pilgrim, "A temporary transient community of pilgrims who enter into a liminal state of spontaneous bonding... Through the journey to a distant place, the pilgrim is separated from everyday social life, temporarily becoming geographically and socially marginal" (Bowditch, 2010).

Finally, some urban and rural festivals change location each time, taking place in different sites around the country or the world. While they illustrate the globalization trend to

² E.g., Burning Man at the Black Rock Desert, Nevada (burningman.org), Afrika Burn at the Stonehenge Private Reserve, South Africa (afrikaburn.com), Nowhere at the Monegros Desert, Spain (goingnowhere.org)

³ E.g., Coachella in the Colorado Desert (coachella.com), Hidden Valley at Matakana Country Park, Auckland, New Zealand (hiddenvalleyfestival.com), Beyond The Valley in Lardner Park, Victoria, Australia (beyondthevalley.com.au)

⁴ E.g., Cosmo Jazz Festival in Chamonix and in the Trient valley, Switzerland (cosmojazzfestival.com), Verbier Festival in the mountain resort of Verbier, Switzerland (verbierfestival.com), Meadows In The Mountains in Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains (meadowsinthemountains.com)

⁵ E.g., G! Festival at Faroe Islands, autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark (gfestival.fo), Shetland Folk Festival at Shetland, Scotland (shetlandfolkfestival.com), Kimito Island Music Festival, Finland (kimitomusicfestival.fi)

neglect borders, they also represent the hope for disobeying homogenization. Jazz Bez Festival is organized in different cities of Poland and Ukraine, and WOMAD travels to another country each time to celebrate “localizations of world culture” (Delanty, Giorgi, & Sassatelli, 2011; Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014). Jasper Chalcraft and Paolo Magaudda describe the experience to follow these festivals from place to place as “festivalscapes,” stressing the experience of escaping ordinary life. They write, “In the end, what is transformed in these festivalscapes may be less the localities themselves than the configuration of ideological and aesthetic linkages that increasingly mean something to organizers, artists and audiences: performed, but public, culture that exists beyond place” (Delanty, Giorgi, & Sassatelli, 2011).

Rethinking the notion of space presents an opportunity to generate, shape, and sustain new communities (Turino, 2008; Aitchison & Pritchard, 2007). For a long time, music-focused scholarship used a paradigm of cultural communities as geographically fixed. It was assumed that the population of a country has shared values, beliefs, and behavior based on national identity (Shelemay, 2011). Personal identity was strictly connected to the common identity as a nation. With an increase of patterns of mobility, developing technical progress and also with the development of postcolonial theory that characterizes the second half of the twentieth-century, researchers began to challenge this limited understanding of community and identity (Shelemay, 2011; Turino, 2008; Fikentscher, 2000).

An important contribution to the study was made by Thomas Turino, who separated individual and national bases of community. After providing a definition of culture as “the habits of thought and practice that are shared among individuals,” he distinguishes and defines two main types of social groupings: one based on particular aspects of the self

(gender, class, age, occupation, interests, and others), and another on shared cultural habits (Turino, 2008). He points out that “music, dance, festivals, and other public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are, in turn, basic to survival” (Turino, 2008). The community turned into imagined societies and the concept of the community shifted to the larger and more abstract understanding, connected not simply with location, but with mobility, identity, and politics (Shelemay, 2011). Even though music festivals can gather people from the specific region, the values and predilections are more important for the creation of the festival communities.

Festival attendees, artists, and management create “imagined communities” around the events based on shared aesthetics, understanding of freedom, and social norms. Each festival community has its tradition of dance, singing, using drugs, style, or other areas of expression. The understanding of social justice is also varied. For example, nightclubs and EDM festivals are rooted in the intersecting, marginalized African American and gay subcultures of post-disco New York City (Fikentscher, 2000). It is often the case that love for a music genre signals the adoption of other moral priorities, so festival audiences bond quickly. It may not happen during the event itself: people can recognize their allies outside the festival space by the festival ribbon or merchandise. Currently, festivals are becoming increasingly multi-genre and their audience more diverse. This creates an opportunity to coalesce, explore different identities, learn tolerance, and celebrate “the other.”

Contemporary festivals provide individual experiences, facilitated collectively within a liminal creative space (Bennett et al., 2014). Festivals, as large music events, have additional outcomes which contribute to the music’s mythology and social narrative. Behind

the stage, festivals influence the public by making representational decisions, creating images and sharing the stories (Whitmore, 2016). In front of the stage, it is a social gathering and a collective experience. In his book *Time Out of Time*, Alessandro Falassi points out that festivals serve to reform culture, to recharge the lifestream of a community by creating new energy, fostering new ideas, declaring and establishing institutions. He concludes that "both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festival celebrates" (Falassi, 1987).

Music festivals allow people to interact across barriers: national barriers, social barriers, political barriers; perhaps most importantly, their own individual barriers. Festivalgoers get a feeling of belonging and safety to experiment with their identity and interact with others. Shared experience affects community formation, which can develop from marginalized into mainstream. This also explains why online festivals have not replaced the social aspects of the in-person festival: online festivals are not able to recreate this kind of collective memory.

Living Utopia

"We were looking for answers. We were looking for other people that felt the same way as we did," said festival attendee Laureen Starobin in the PBS documentary *Woodstock: Three Days That Defined a Generation*, "If 400,000 people could get together and have absolutely no violence, absolutely no conflict, I felt like if we could bring all that love back into society, we could change the world" (Goodman, 2019). Woodstock is a bright example of

music festivals as escape from social troubles as they were in 1969: militarization, the war in Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement, Women's Rights Movement (Goodman, 2019; Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014). Hippies manifested pacific society, freedom of the body, the mind, and the heart; and the acceptance of everyone who shared the same utopian worldviews (Goodman, 2019). Each festival offers something similar: to leave the everyday life full of troubles and injustice and join the ideal community.

Every festival represents its ideal world and creates its own utopia. The notion of "utopia" or "utopian" originated in the Greek words for "place" (τόπος or "topos") and "no" (οὐ or "u"), or in some readings, "good" (εὖ or "eu") (Saffle, 2010). Thus, the word simultaneously means "no place" or "good place," a place that may not exist in real life but exists as perpetual aspiration. The conception of Utopia belongs to Thomas More, an English lawyer, social philosopher, and writer, who first wrote of it as a perfect imaginary world. In his book *Utopia* (1516), the island society has no social, political or cultural conflict. Festivals serve as an example of such society: a perfect world, beautiful and just, in opposition to the flawed actual world.

Lydia Goehr, in her article "Political Music and the Politics of Music" (2010), points out that music strives toward truthful regulation of our world, similarly to legal and moral systems. "Though beauty is an end in itself, it nonetheless still serves as a 'symbol' or 'analogue' of morality and of the political good," she writes. "Whether art, like moral or legal systems, would still be necessary in a perfect world now becomes a difficult question whose answer clearly depends upon what one puts forward as a perfect world" (Goehr, 1994).

Michael Saffle and Hon-Lun Yang analyze the aesthetics and social aspects of music communities from the perspective of utopia (Saffle & Yang, 2010). They draw attention to

the appearance of utopias in narrative literature, not only as fantastical or abstract societies that criticize actual living but also as developing experience. “There is always something socially transformative, radical, or even apocalyptic about authentic utopias of all kinds” (Saffle & Yang, 2010). Even though many utopias are often concerned through economic affairs, religion and politics (Fokkema, 2011), music can be a part of utopian dreams too (Goehr, 1994; Kutschke, 2015).

Music festivals create an autonomous world of relationships, laws, rituals. As I stated in the previous research section, the liminality of festivals pushes the development of identities (Aitchison & Pritchard, 2007; Bennett et al., 2014; Bowditch, 2010). In other words, the festival utopia is a phenomenon of transcendent individual experiences and embodied collective dreams of an alternate reality. Saffle and Yang differentiate three types of music utopia that can be applied to the festivals as well. There are logotopias, which are imagined communities organized around texts; phonotopias, imagined communities organized around sounds; and tachytopias, real communities organized around events, often touristic and attractive (Saffle & Yang, 2010). Music festivals create both virtual and on-person experiences, thus they combine all three types.

The festival network consists of composers, critics and journalists, management, and communities of attendees. In terms of the textual concerns of “logotopias” (Saffle & Yang, 2010), there are festival statements, journalism about artists, critics reviews, social media posts, hashtags, and other ways of textual communication. Additionally, the music itself can be considered as language and text. The power of language starts from the name of the festival and lasts throughout the whole festival cycle. Through marketing efforts, the public engages with the festival through messaging; even those who do not attend the festival

engage with it and become part of that community. Take for example the powerful poster of The Katowice JazzArt Festival (PL) in 2014, with a provocative quote of Quincy Jones included on the main sheet (pic 1). Additionally, social media outlets provide an opportunity for virtual festivals to create their own experience, complementary or completely different from the actual event.

“Phonotopias” (Saffle & Yang, 2010) create community through sound. Recordings, streaming platforms, radio, vinyl, and other outlets generate audiences around artists, and music genres. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many artists and venues launched on-line performances that inspired audiences and helped to endure turbulent time. Erykah Badu performed livestreamed concerts from her room (Yoo, 2020). Robbie Williams during few days had been doing karaoke session at home via Instagram (Eames, 2020). The New-York based Jazz Gallery venue hosted Happy Hour Zoom meetings and Lockdown Sessions events (jazzgallery.org). Many other members of the international music community found a way to stay connected with the audience (Zaru & Cruz, 2020; Salam, 2020; Spero, 2020). Some new listeners can transition to face-to-face engagement with music during the live concert or festival, however, some part of the public will remain only members of virtual communities. Saffle and Yang mention that web-based communities of “logotopias” and “phoenotopia” are hard to distinguish, as social media provides a platform for both sound and text or image information. However, any of them provides a safe place for the audience's opinions as well as like-minded public (Saffle & Yang, 2010).

Finally, “tachytopias” (Saffle & Yang, 2010) are communities that occur in specific places and times. So instead of previously considered “no-place” types of music utopia, these are closer to the meaning of the “good place” (Saffle, 2010). “Tachytopias” (Saffle & Yang,

2010) provide personal and collective experience, often in opposition to our increasingly globalized, consumer-driven, late-capitalist world order. Utopia reflects the intention to move forward to a better world without social injustice. Along with music programs, some festivals advocate for social and political issues like gender justice, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and other human and civil rights.

Music festivals, where people come together to share experiences of meaning-making, and imagination can describe or capture fleeting intimations of utopian places (Saffle, Yang, 2010). And even if utopia as the “nowhere place” can never be reached, the destination determines the perpetual development of that society.



Pic 1. Poster of The Katowice JazzArt Festival
Source: behance.net

Leisure as Resistance

Music festivals are leisure activities. However, they are also spaces for resistance, challenging dominant ideologies, and temporarily leaving an imperfect world for a cheerful and just one. Even though it seems illogical to associate escapism with political action, the ability to reduce power constitutes the rebellious power of music festivals and shows how they can serve as a vehicle of social and political changes.

Falassi described festival typology based on power, as “those given by the people for the people, those given by the establishment for itself, and those held by the people for the establishment, by the establishment for the people, and by the people against the establishments” (Falassi, 1987). In the contemporary world, festivals claim to be “given by the people for the people” (Falassi, 1987) with a mission to cherish the community and its values. For example, The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival proclaims that it promotes, preserves, perpetuates, and encourages the music, culture, and heritage of communities in Louisiana (jazzandheritage.org). Chicago Jazz Festival’s mission is to showcase Chicago’s vast jazz talent alongside national and international artists in order to inspire, educate, and build a jazz audience of all ages (jazzinchicago.org).

However, festivals have been criticized that they represent only a particular group of populations, often the socially and politically dominant one (Waterman, 1998). Some events are dedicated to forms of music considered exclusive, such as opera. Others intentionally create an elitist circle around them (Negrier, Agusti, & Guerin, 2013). While entering this circle is possible and often encouraged, redistribution of power does not happen. Festivals of popular music are often contrasted with “high art” events since they “[enable] the politically marginal to express discontent through ritual, thereby restricting their revolutionary impulses to symbolic form, in which case the festival acts as a medium of resistance to the established

order” (Waterman, 1998). It is not always possible to distinguish “high-art” and “low-art” festivals today. The programs often include various genres and artists with different levels of popularity. The social impact of such festivals is in merging different audiences, thus different social groups. Additionally, if it is possible to reject cliché about genres, and perceive music without prejudice, it might be possible to abandon clichés about different social groups and individuals as well.

Another aspect of “given by the people for the people” is the politics of participation. Festivals in general are controlled by a group of directors and producers who decide on venues, types of music and artists, and audience messaging. The audiences mostly consume these materials. However, there is a trend to engage the audience in a deeper level of participation (Turino, 2008; Robinson, 2015). Some festivals, such as Burning Man, completely erase the distinctions between festivalgoers, management, and musicians (Bowditch, 2010). MUTEK.SF encourages audiences to help to create or participate in interactive art installations (mutek.org); Winter Jazzfest offers Q&A sessions and panel discussions (winterjazzfest.com); hashtag #roadtocoachella currently shows more than 5,000 posts of festival and its sponsor via Instagram; #wearejazz started by London Jazz Festivals has more than 1000 posts. Furthermore, it is impossible to imagine festivals without volunteers, who work not just for free attendance but because of the community experience (Boyle-Clapp, Brown, & Gard, 2017). It demonstrates to the audience that their actions impact the final version of the event.

Another reason for critiques of the social power of festivals is the intensified commercialization of the industry. Festivals have become an important participant in the market economy (Negrier, Agusti, & Guerin, 2013; Robinson, 2015), and their drive for profit reproduces dominant power relations rather than emancipation. Aside from the

potential of gaining profit from popular artists rather than the avant-garde, festivals get attention from business, who seek to explore the promotion of their brand through experiential marketing, i.e. attaching a brand to “a particular experience, like music festivals, where that experience is quite intense” (Tickle, 2011). However, even commercial festivals can make a difference for their community and its distribution of power. Previously, it has been discussed that festivals fuel cultural tourism and contribute to the image and wellness of cities and places normally neglected. They affect the decentralization process of countries and are instrumental in facilitating development of democratic societies.

Finally, some festivals take a stand on particular social issues. The EFG London Jazz festival (UK), Enjoy Jazz Festival (DE), Melbourne International Jazz Festival (AU), and others joined the Keychange foundation to advocate for festivals and music organizations achieving a 50:50 gender balance by 2022 (keychange.eu). Winter Jazzfest explicitly supports social and racial justice, gender equality, immigrant rights, and progress through wellness by presenting panel discussions, speeches between concerts, and additional non-concert special events (winterjazzfest.com). Berlin Jazzfest rises social issues through festival statements (e.g., Williams, 2017).

Thus, music festivals, through their organizational practices, programming, and a high degree of press coverage, impact the formation and transformation of communities and cultures. People experiment with their own identities and meet others. The utopian beauty of the festivals offers escape from troubled times. Aside from temporal relief, they can stoke the belief that if it is possible to create such a world even for a moment, perhaps it could become a universal stratum.

Chapter IV. Power of Representation

The J-word

Plato, in his *Republic*, wrote that town administrations should avoid the introduction of new musical genres as a change in the basis of music always implies a change in the basic social order. New sonic models can evoke new senses, new identities, and collective consciousness that lead to a rethinking of the traditional stratum (Ferrari, 2000). Newness inevitably meets an opposition of power by exercising intentional misattribution and appropriation of cultural codes (Ferrari, 2000). My research focuses on jazz festivals, so it is important to consider how Black American music has been articulated and discussed during its evolution. As a socially subversive art, its history demonstrates perfectly Plato's wisdom. In the context of this research, it is important to understand how music is being represented in the national and international scene, what impact it makes, and what messages have been sent by music industry.

During the development of the field of African American Thought, music has been articulated as a tool of liberation, articulation of collective identity, the spiritual source of vitality (Jones, 1963; Smethurst, 2005). W.E.B. Du Bois published "The Souls of Black Folk" in 1903, less than a decade after becoming the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard. In the book, he writes that melodies may last longer than lyrics in cultural memory, and that drummed language may travel further than spoken language as communication. He illustrates how music can uplift the spirit and considers spirituals "the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas," capable of changing the narrative

of the history and culture of the African American population (Du Bois, 1968). He also shows the importance of music in creating communities and feeling of belonging (Du Bois, 1968).

In contrast to their social voicelessness, the improvised solo is an important attribute of Black music as individual expression, and as a form of unpredictable and improvised existence (Moten, 2018). Amiri Baraka talks about Black American music as “the expression of an attitude, or a collection of attitudes, about the world, and only secondarily an attitude about the way music is made” (Jones, 1963). He argues that jazz as folk art is an integral part of social and political experience. A few decades later, Langston Hughes illustrates the same in his book *The Best of Simple* as he writes, “Be-Bop came from the police beating Negroes’ heads,” and “Bop comes out of the dark days. That’s why real Bop is mad, wild, frantic, crazy — and not to be dug unless you’ve seen dark days, too. Folks who ain’t suffered much cannot play Bop, neither appreciate it” (Hughes, 1990).

Black music is political by its nature; however, during the period of the Civil Rights Era its messaging became more explicit. During the 1960s, politically-motivated Black poets, artists, musicians, and writers united into the Black Arts Movement (Floyd & Samuel, 1995; Smethurst, 2005; Neal, 1968; Tkweme, 2007; Baskerville, 1994). This movement offered new cultural aesthetics, separate symbolism, mythology, critique, iconology. They attempted to change the historical and cultural narrative of African Americans (Neal, 1968). The music of John Coltrane, Art Ensemble of Chicago, and Sun Ra was Afrocentric without overt protest statements, and they have since become icons of jazz as Black resistance music (Tkweme, 2007). At the same time, Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln were directly and provokingly questioning their unfreedom (Roach, 1960), Charles Mingus was using music and performance raise political consciousness and disturb the status quo (Mingus, 1964), and

Archie Shepp was endorsing revolutionary political figures and ideals in his music (Shepp, 1965).

During this time, the term “jazz” began to symbolize something different for its musicians, many of whom rejected the term as a term they had not invented (Baskerville, 1994). For instance, Max Roach pointed out that the term “jazz” had become a word that meant abuse and exploitation of Black musicians, cultural prejudice and condescension:

We must cleanse our minds of false categories which are not basic to us and which divide us rather unite us, regardless of what they are called, (jazz, R&B, blues, etc) are various expressions of black music, black culture itself, the expression of Africans in the diaspora. Yet black musicians are placed in these categories... and they face financial success or failure depending upon their classification at a given time (quoted in Baskerville, 1994).

These political components of Black music are not different 2020. Black music remains a mode of resistance through its form and messages (Duda, 2020; Faircloth, 2019; Robson, 2016). Advocacy for Black credentials in music continues as well. Through Nickolas Payton’s efforts, #BAM (Black American Music) became one of the most recognizable hashtags within the Black music community on social media. The hashtags #jazzdoesntexist and #jazzisafourletterword are quotations from Max Roach’s interview with W. A. Brower (Dawkins, 1984). In his essay *On Why Jazz Isn't Cool Anymore* (2011) he says: “My ancestors didn’t play Jazz, they played Traditional, Modern and Avantgarde New Orleans Music. I don’t play Jazz. I don’t let others define who I am.”

Just as the word “jazz” was not invented by African Americans, jazz festivals weren’t either. The conception of this kind of event came from Europe, and is rarely questioned as a form for representing non-European experiences (Cudny, 2014). Additionally, since the world “jazz” artificially divides Black music into genres and often marginalizes the artists, jazz festivals do, too. The celebration and correct representation of Black music would include

different forms of this music into festival line-ups. However, often when modern festivals strive to be multigenre, they create hierarchies. For example, it might be logical to invite the Rolling Stones or the Who to the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, as their music is based on blues, but they are there as headliners, creating a situation where an event meant to celebrate Black music exploits its image to prioritize white voices.

From the first festival in the United States until now, festival leaders have been mostly white (Sisario, 2020). Even the most empathetic white person can't understand what it means to be Black, which is an essential part of this music. Thus, the jazz festival industry has been implicated in the misrepresentation of these communities. In order to correct this, the approach of the festival programming and communication should be modified.

Newport Jazz Festival

Baby baby, have you heard the news?

Got festival eyes, got the Newport Blues

Newport Newport, gonna have a ball

If you ain't there baby, you ain't nowhere at all

Rhode Island in summer, Newport in July

I'm gonna dig that festival, and here's the reason why

Music makes me baby, makes me want to move

Swingin' in society, in a high-class groove

Flyin' down to Newport, man I wanna swing

With the real nobility: The Duke, The Count, The King

So come on down to Newport, if you wanna be confused

A panel of professors, will authenticate the blues

Marshall Stearns, on occasion of the first newport jazz festival, 1954

The first large jazz festival in the United States was called the First Annual American Jazz Festival (Wein, 2003). Today we know it as the Newport Jazz Festival. An analysis of early years of the festival shows how the organizer's efforts impacted the cultural and political changes. The festival was created in 1954, two year before the Jazz Ambassadors program was launched (Perrigo, 2017; Berkeley, 2018), eight years before Jim Crow laws were officially overruled (Fremon, 2000), and almost a decade before the apex of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Arts Movement (Smethurst, 2005; Tkweme, 2007; Monson, 2007). Jazz already was performed in clubs, and changed its aesthetic direction several times (Jones, 1963; Floyd & Samuel, 1995; Davis & Troupe, 2011). However, this festival symbolizes a complex story of creating a public image of African American music in the United States (O'Meally, 2004; Dunkel, 2012). On one side, the efforts of festival promoters and supporters to expand the jazz audience and trumpet the geniuses of composers resulted in bringing this music into the mainstream, and into the pages of national and international media, some of whom covered jazz for the first time. At the same time, the festival got the attention of intellectuals and critics who started the conversation about the authenticity of jazz and its place in American heritage.

On the inaugural weekend of July 16 and 17, 1954, Rhode Island was transformed by the Boston jazz promoter George Wein and founders of the festival Elaine and Louis Lorillard (Wein, 2003). They should be credited for starting the conversation about the role of these festivals in popular music mythology.

These founders wanted to bring entertainment to their Newport community during the summer (Wein, 2003). The panel discussions were indoors and live performances outdoors. A few times during history the festival changed its location. Before changing its address in the US, George Wein put together a European tour in 1967 called the Newport Jazz Festival in Europe. Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Sara Vaughan, Archie Shepp and other artists performed on the tour (Davis & Troupe, 2011). In 1972, the festival moved to New York City. In 1977 additionally to New York, it took place at Saratoga Springs, New York (Wilson, 1978; Wein, 2003). Between 1982 and 2004, the festival was organized in Madarao, Japan (Davis & Troupe, 2011; Wein, 2003). In 1981 the festival came back to Newport (Wein, 2003). This story of transit illustrates how the festival space was geographically abstract, and how the community was connected to the *mission* of the festival, not its location (Turino, 2008; Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014).

The first festival was attended by over 13,000 people, a third of the local population at that time⁶. In 1969 there were 45,800 people (Dove, 1970). The audience was growing and for the residents of Newport, it became cause for concern about social disturbance (Wein, 2003). Newport is an upper-class community, who considered jazz “low-brow” art (Dunkel, 2012). At the same time, attendees were young, who came to the free concerts with little money for hotels. They often could not be served anywhere due to their race (Wein, 2003). Some slept outdoors, drunk, and violated social decorum. Furthermore, the majority of the musicians and their fans were African American. Even those citizens who might appreciate the music did not appreciate the company of Black musicians. Racial prejudice existed for many years to come. Wein, the Lorillards, and the Board of the festival understood the challenge and saw it as a problem to be corrected. Several years after the festival was

⁶ According to the United States Census reports, in the 1950s in the city of Newport lived 37,564.

organized, the Newport city elected Paul Gaines, an African American, as its mayor (Wein, 2003).

Another challenge with the community happened when Wein decided to include Rock music into jazz line-up in 1969 (Wein, 2003; Brennan, 2006). Musicians, especially those who did not recognize genres, supported these experiments. Miles Davis, who pointed out the same blues roots in jazz and rock music, said that he enjoyed rock & roll, and especially its young, vibrant audience (Davis & Troupe, 2011). Rock fans were loud and unrestrained, most especially when organizers announced the festival was sold out. In the end, the city administration asked not to schedule the rock bands in 1970. Wein agreed but publicly called it “a form of repression” (Dove, 1970).

One of the essential attributes of these festivals and one of the most discussed impacts of the music industry on society is representation. Starting with the creation of the line-up, the promotion company and during the festival events, the organizers are responsible for putting music into categories, explaining it, and creating the narrative. A major part of promotion is based on the artist's story and music. During the festival, the artist is the center of attention and fondness. Because Newport Jazz Festival was the first festival in the United States, it can be assumed that jazz musicians prior to the festival might not have performed for such a huge audience. So, considering the time it was equally empowered both for the Black musicians and for a Black audience seeing the recognition of Black musicians.

Since the first year of the festival, organizers have hosted panel discussions (Wein, 2003; O'Meally, 2004). Management understands that the festival serves not only as entertainment, but as an educational tool for society and an opportunity to send a message (O'Meally, 2004; Gennari, 2006; Wein, 2003; Davis & Troupe, 2011). To “authenticate the blues,” as Marshall Stearns said (quoted in O'Meally, 2004), was an important part of the

developing festival. The very first panel was dedicated to “The Place of Jazz in American Culture” (O’Meally, 2004). It was moderated by the “jazz priest” Father Norman O’Conner, with presentations by Allan Merriam, anthropology professor at Northwestern University, Henry Cowell, music professor at the Peabody Institute, Marshall Stearns, English professor at Hunter College and founder of the Institute of Jazz Studies, and Willis James, folklorist and ethnomusicology professor at Spelman College (O’Meally, 2004). The first panel illustrates what Amiri Baraka wrote in his essay: “most jazz critics have been white Americans, but most important jazz musicians have not been” (Jones, 2010).

The panels of the following editions of the festival included speakers such as composer and educator Willis James; poet and social activist Langston Hughes; essayist, poet, and activist James Baldwin; and professor, folklorist, and poet Sterling Brown, along with other ambassadors of African American Thought. Festival management was predominantly white, which raised discussions about ownership of culture (O’Meally, 2004). The Black community has addressed the need to get back the control of cultural production and attribution for a long time (Baskerville, 1994). However, Hughes among others supported the festival and their efforts to overcome racial prejudice:

“From its beginnings the board of the Newport Jazz Festival insisted that the Festival be completely democratic and interracial. Audiences, performers and (after a few early adjustments) all Newport hotels, restaurants and places of public accommodation were happily integrated without regard to race, color, age, sex or previous conditions of unhepness” (quoted in Gennari, 2006).

Another way to make an impact on the perception of music and community is representation in the media. This is a particularly strong instrument of the festivals, as large events usually get big coverage. National and international media, including *the New York*

Times and *the Herald-Tribune*, *Life*, *Look*, *the New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *Seventeen*, and newspapers from as far away as Mexico City and Paris wrote about the two-day event (Hershorn & Peterson, 2011). They described it as an ascension of great art form, “the social pedigree be damned” (Lopes, 2002). Also, *New York Amsterdam News* and other Black newspapers wrote about the festival not only in the entertainment section but in the social pages, where the festival was articulated as “the cultivated leisure of the black bourgeoisie” (O’Meally, 2004).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the images of the musicians and the festival brand itself were distinct from how jazz was perceived (O’Meally, 2004). Photos and illustrations depicted artists and the event as bohemian, avant-garde, and intellectual. The official program of the festival in 1955 looks fresh even from today’s perspective (Pic. 2-5). The visual presentation of jazz as “high art” was an important part of fighting the prejudice towards music and artists who created it.

Finally, the music of Newport Jazz Festival expanded the jazz community. As “phoenotopia,” an imagined community based on sounds (Saffle & Yang, 2010), it also exists on dozens of albums recorded during the festivals, classics such as “At The Newport Jazz Festival” by Duke Ellington (1956), “New Thing at Newport” by John Coltrane and Archie Shepp (1965), and “Live at Newport” by McCoy Tyner (1964).

The history of the Newport Jazz Festival illustrates its impact on both the field of leisure in the United States and the narrative of African American music and community (O’Meally, 2004; Dunkel, 2012; Gennari, 2006). Some of the decisions can be criticized, yet the precedent of providing equal opportunities for musicians from a different background was important, especially during the early years of the festival.

In 1955 Senator Green opened the festival with the speech proclaiming jazz to be “a revolutionary force” and compared “its impact and music with the impact and politics of the revolutionists of 1776” (Morton, 2008). The Newport Jazz Festival and their marketing efforts spread the ideas of “the great Newport doctrine of helping new people and new ideas,” and make artistic and social reform (O'Meally, 2004).

The Newport Jazz Festival broadened the music community, and mixed the lower class with the established elite, acting as “provocateur on behalf of democracy” (Hershorn & Peterson, 2011). The festival helped to “reaffirm the boundaries” (Roy, 2010) that divided social classes, promoted the idea of racial inclusion and equality (Wein, 2003), and affected the representation of Black music and community (O'Meally, 2004; Dunkel, 2012; Gennari, 2006). All elements of the festival experience are the parts of public conversations of the social issues and the cultural and political trends in society.



Pic 2. Pages of brochure of the Newport Jazz Festival 1955
Source: archive.org



Pic 3. Pages of brochure of the Newport Jazz Festival 1955
Source: archive.org



Pic 4. Pages of brochure of the Newport Jazz Festival 1955
Source: archive.org



Pic 5. Pages of brochure of the Newport Jazz Festival 1955
Source: archive.org

Social Responsibility and Curatorial Approach

Political power lies in the perception of music and in social experiences during the collective events. Before an audience hears music or even gets a sense of the event, festival management makes decisions that affect the perception of that music, framing the expectations, changing the dynamics of representation and negotiating what values deserve to be saved or assessed. Through images, stories, and approaches to programming, festival personnel affect social development. The acknowledgment of this raises question about the social responsibility of the festival management and an ethical evaluation of its practices. Social responsibility means that an organization or individual must act in a manner that benefits society or a specific group (Ganti, 2019). Music festivals and leaders, in this sense, function as mediators between artists and the public (Whitmore, 2016), promoting music for

common good by contributing to educational processes, inclusion, public dialogue, and by growing humanity within society.

Aleysia K. Whitmore analyzes the ethics of representation from the perspective of value. She explains that industry personnel have the power to define something as authentic, exotic, or real (Whitmore, 2016). Music industry leaders are motivated by their own views, expectations of the audience, professional circles (scholars, critics, colleagues), commercial and ideological priorities of the organization. There is often a conflict between these categories that change the dynamic of representation. Audiences, for example, may be more interested in music that they already know, business sponsors support popular music more than niche, while professional networks expect more provocative and sophisticated programming, and the organization might lay somewhere between the ideological and business side (Whitmore, 2016). How the festival solves this puzzle is an ethical question.

The ethical promotion of the music includes respectful and truthful representation of the artists and their work (Sankowski, 1992). During the event, it is a matter of sound and light quality. Cheap equipment, instruments brands different than those requested on musicians' riders, and stage effects can distract the attention of listeners and completely change the sonic experience. However, before musicians come on stage, programming and marketing departments may create the interpretation of the music. The evaluation of this process includes how close the interpretation is to the symbolism of music. It requires a deep understanding of the social and cultural background of the artists, their aesthetic views and schools. As Laurent Aubert points out, understanding the music and maintaining solidarity with the author is difficult "insofar as we recognize that he or she is a holder of values we have lost, or even never known" (Aubert, 2007). During the promotion of music worth

listening to, it is vital not to endow it by the meaning that the author did not create, not to sell it through underground, exotic, marginal tags, that affects not only music but artists and the group of society they represent.

Festivals have a responsibility to their artists and communities, one of morality and integrity. Morality is about recognizing what is right and wrong; integrity is about exercising that knowledge. Some festival organizers refuse to take a stand on social issues and try to act as neutral agents. For example, in 2018 the Montreal Jazz Festival included the SLĀV performance in the program (Dunlevy, 2018), which is a Canadian theatrical production based on slave songs from the American South, conceived by a white director and singer and performed by a predominantly white cast. The show incited public protest on a matter of cultural appropriation (Hamilton, 2018). The festival claimed that they built an environment where "...there is no race, no gender, no religion and all human beings are equal" (quoted in Hamilton, 2018). However, as African American singer Moses Sumney wrote in his official statement about this issue and canceling his show as a protest:

"You all see race because you're putting on a show about race... Often when white liberals move to "not see race," whiteness becomes the default mode of acceptable behavior, and white voices become prioritized in art and work spaces... Anyone putting on a show incorporating Black experiences should already know this" (Sumney, 2018).

The Montreal Jazz Festival canceled the show and apologized (Wicks, 2018). However, avoiding the issue does not make the promoter above politics. This supports established power and normalizes the problem. Within the jazz industry, it is especially important to understand the social background of African American music, which is deeply rooted in Black experience (Floyd & Samuel, 1995; Jones, 2010; Moten, 2018).

Speaking about the duty to community, festival organizers should consider additional circumstances of the venue or city and neighborhoods where the event takes place. In the previous chapters, I discussed how festivals can make a positive impact on places, cultivate consciousness and appreciation of those spaces; however, negative results can also be seen. When it promotes property and increases market value and tourist interest, it affects historic local communities. The critical examination of the intervention should identify which kinds of neighborhood reconstruction are questionable and which salutary (Atkinson, 2008).

Consistency is a significant aspect of social justice initiative as well. For instance, the Amsterdam Dance Event in 2018 was involved in gender justice discussion even though the festival was a member of Shesaid.so organization, which advocates for women inclusion from all sectors of the music industry. Artist Konstantin, who was in the line-up of the festival, made a misogynist statement. The public expected that the artist will be excluded from the future event, but the festival only organized a panel discussion about the issue (ADE defies calls to drop Konstantin from lineup, promises panel on sexism featuring him .2018). Such an approach is hypocritical, and shows that the festival joins social justice initiatives for advertisement purposes rather than a real contribution to gender justice.

So, while there are solid bases of philosophy and scholarship works about the social impact of music, live performances and collective experiences, the role of festivals and management in politics is underestimated. Even though the dilemma of commercial needs and cultural missions is an important one, it is just one of many ethical aspects of performing leadership in the industry. Unlike the visual arts or film festival industry, music events are not considered a field with curatorial sensibility, which is a sensitive and thoughtful work of institution or individual with arts and community. Using the term “art director” instead of

“curator” in the festival industry unconsciously limits the role to selection. Both professionals, however, work with programming, interpretation, representation, space intervention, and production of art events.

Jazzfest Berlin is a rare example of a curatorial approach in the music industry, even though until 2018 it was not articulated. The festival was launched in 1965, and today it is one of the oldest jazz festivals in Europe. In the description of the festival on the official website the previous program directors are listed: “Known as Berliner Jazztage until 1980 it was directed by Joachim-Ernst Berendt (1964-72), George Gruntz (1973-94), Albert Mangelsdorff (1995-2000), Nils Landgren (2001, 2008-11), John Corbett (2002), Peter Schulze (2003-07), Bert Noglik (2012-14) and Richard Williams (2015-17) and is curated (sic!) since 2018 by the curator Nadin Deventer” (About Jazzfest Berlin).

During the long history and successive change of artistic leaders, the festival was successful in the terms of approach to jazz music and social issues. In the first year, Joachim-Ernst Berendt asked Martin Luther King, Jr. to write an essay about jazz. The text that became a statement of the inaugural year of the festival, Dr. King wrote about the social power of jazz music:

It has strengthened us with its sweet rhythms when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits were down. And now, Jazz is exported to the world... Everybody has the Blues. Everybody longs for meaning. Everybody needs to love and be loved. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith. In music, especially this broad category called Jazz, there is a stepping stone towards all of these (The Essay by Martin Luther King, Jr. That Lives Large In Jazz. 2019).

In the 2017 edition that followed the referendum about the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, and the US election that brought Donald Trump to the government, Richard Williams echoed in the central festival statement:

In a world where walls are being erected and borders strengthened every day, where leaders are encouraging cultural isolationism and minorities are being marginalized, and where children are being taught that difference is something to be feared, jazz exists to remind us of a simple lesson: that people and societies are at their best when they work together in a spirit of openness and inclusion (Williams, 2017).

The position of current curator Nadin Deventer, which is “to open it up to a new audience while integrating political issues” (Berlin Jazzfest in November. 2018) continues the mission. The posters of the festival reflect the festival's approach (Pic. 6, 7). For decades Jazzfest Berlin has created programs acknowledging the social power of music and events. It did not turn the festival into propaganda. It is still a joyful event, organized mindfully and ethically.

Maura Reilly posits the conception of “curatorial activism” for museums, however this can be broadened to all arts. She explains the ethical and intelligent approach for the practice of organizing art events, aiming at certain constituencies of artists and visions no longer excluded from the main narrative. Reilly states that curators have committed themselves to radical initiatives such as “challenging assumptions, promoting the margins over the center, the minority over the majority, as well as positing curatorial “strategies of resistance,” provoking intelligent debate, disseminating new knowledge, which, in the end, offers up signs of hope and affirmation” (Reilly, 2018).

Curatorial activism does not mean creating new meanings and symbols absent in music prior to the festival line-up. It also does not mean directing the collective experience

towards one particular political idea. It is about responsible and fair representation of art and the ethical practice of organizations and individuals.



Pic 6. Berliner Jazztage 1968. Design: Gunter Kieser.
Source: Berlin Festspiele



Pic 7. Jazzfest Berlin 2015. Design: Ta-Trung.
Source: Berlin Festspiele

Chapter V. Conclusion

An interdisciplinary analysis of the literature on jazz festivals shows how they impact society. Festivals produce this power through space (Aitchison & Pritchard, 2007; Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Waterman, 1998), rethinking identity (Turino, 2008; Shelemay, 2011), belonging (Bowditch, 2010), representation (Jones, 1963), and utopian liminality (Saffle & Yang, 2010). These events can be transcendental for participants: those on stage, and those in the audience. Festival leaders should understand their responsibility as cultural mediators.

Festivals create collective memories that bond different people together. As festivals decrease genre specificity, audiences become more diverse. Live music remains a powerful medium to break boundaries and facilitate communication between individuals and groups (Roy, 2010). Because of social media engagement, these meetings have an afterlife beyond the event.

Like any other art organization, music festivals work with symbols and meanings, which in turn affect attitudes and consciousness. If music embodies hopes and fears, aspirations, expectations, senses of beauty, and understandings of justice (Goehr, 1994), then music festivals have the same potential. When song is performed from the stage of the festival it cannot lose all of its political power, but the organizational practice of the festival might obscure it. It is an especially important topic as jazz festivals meant to promote Black culture and empower Black creators, instead promote “universalism” (Bares, 2015) and global ownership (Gennari, 2006) of Black music.

Music festivals are events with big influential power: their audience is bigger than one concert, the media coverage is bigger, and so their influence is bigger as well. The festival industry is failing to recognize that the action it takes makes a difference in society. The content of the event such as music, program, marketing materials impacts the understanding of the experiences of individuals. Instead of other forms of collective representation of arts, such as exhibitions and film festivals, music festivals rarely provide curatorial statements. Such a practice would stimulate festival leaders to think about the music and program more deeply and represent artists more ethically. In this turbulent time of demands for social change, it is especially important to reevaluate these practices.

Today, the whole world observes the Black Lives Matter movement responding to systemic racism in the United States. Organizations national and international write statements of solidarity, join social media awareness campaigns, produce fundraisers for select groups such as the NAACP, and other funds, and in other ways join the movement. The revolution has a powerful image. It trends. It creates a hopeful picture. But real change will happen only when recognition of Black contributions, equality, and inclusion become a part of everyday life. Routine is not as romantic as protests, but it makes the change.

Recognizing their own political power and social responsibility does not limit festivals in terms of aesthetics, nor does it turn joy into political sloganeering. It actually does the opposite. Understanding power in this way demonstrates the importance of these festivals to social life. Both political life and festivals challenge isolation and silence, their opposites, and as we already seen, that creates no progress.

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